I sit and I wait in the back of my temporary prison. This Officer Hammerston doesn't offer anything but an occasional growl as we drive down the old country roads. The shadows of trees roll over the car's windows in the twilight, only to add the melencholy mood. It's difficult for me to parse these feeling: a tingling curiosity—what's going to happen to Cassie. Maybe this Officer Sadowski is going to help bring Cassie to a haven, the heaven that I could not find, having lost my way to Eden. Dancing with it is still the lingering feelings of failure, a taunt that I didn't do my best; a scowl from within. In the mire of emotions, both anger and sadness continue to play.

As we pass the signs riding back to my hometown, it puts things in perspective. It dawns on me that I haven't been gone even a single week. It's been four days at the most; honestly, in all of the chaos of everything I've lost track. However many miles we walked through the woods, we've only crossed our way into the neighboring town, possibly one more town than that. More importantly, and more strikingly my emotions and my philosophies haven't moved in the slightest. My own delusions of hope may have distracted them, but the point remains how cruel and meticulous reality is. Despite my every effort, big or small, Cassie's world has remained unchanged.

"Are you crying?" the officer asks me. It's clearly in disgust.

I don't feel obliged enough to answer him, and instead turn away, back to the window. He scoffs and returns to his party of pride. He stopped a criminal mastermind from hurting an innocent child, and was instrumental in getting the girl back to the safety of her homestead. I feel tempted to crash that party, and let him in on one cold hard secret. I think better of it. Let him think that he's doing a good deed. Let him think that he's a hero. Let him tell his own family about my sick delusions. It's a comfort that I wish I could provide myself. Let me think that I tried.

It's not long before we're out of the woods and onto the highway. The feeling of being in car during the night time has always managed to soothe my soul; just seeing oncoming lights, ribbons of yellow and red is a strange sort of relaxing. Added to that is the gentle hum of a heater, keeping the chill at bay. It gives me a strange sense of nostalgia, and it manages to keep my thoughts at bay. I realize that I feel tired. The adrenaline has left me. I'd fall asleep, but I don't want to miss this oasis of peace and serenity, lost in the quagmire. It feels refreshing that, for this one and only moment, the world doesn't seem out to get me.

At long last, the officer takes a ramp off of the highway. We pass the stores and eateries that I've come to know as common as we make our way through the town. I see a dull old street light, giving off an orange glow, flickering on and off. People walk to and fro as if it were midday. My mind takes a photograph of the commonness. It's the first time I've seen it in such a long while, and if fate continues its streak, it's going to be the last time in an even longer while. I'll need the memory, as a sort of comfort, to remind me of a time when I believed that hell was only something you heard about in religious chapels or old books, a time when I believed that the good of the world was not just possible to be protected, but deserving of it. It was a time of innocence.

I finally arrive at the police station. For all intents and purposes I understand this to be my new home. The officers, Hammerston funnily enough, gives me one final gift: the phone call. I can trouble anyone in the world for them not to believe me. I could call my job and get fired, provided they hadn't burned all records of ever knowing me already. It's not long before I realize who I have to call—the only person who's seen shadows of this horrible shade of reality.

"Lucy?" I say as the phone stops ringing.

"What the fuck is wrong with you!?" She shouts at me. "Do you seriously know how much you fucked yourself? Are you crazy!? You must be nuts. I can't believe that I ever went out with a psycho."

She continues on this trail of wind. I don't stop her. I just let her go on and on. Considering what she must have heard in the meanwhile, the stories spun by the media and fears of her own, this needs to be done. She says everything. Calls me every foul word in the dictionary. At least half of them I deserve. If there's a vein of relief trapped in these words, it's that most of these words revolve around stupidity rather than me being evil or worse. It's something that would be so easy to do, and I could only imagine the wider world being so kind. When the fires have died down, I know that it's time to proceed.

"You're right, what I did was stupid," is the first thing I say. It can only help to put out the fires some more. "I knew that what I was doing was stupid all along, but... Lucy,

you weren't there. I couldn't live with myself if something happened to Cassie and I did nothing."

"But to kidnap her!? Look, I know we were stuck, but to actually go through with something like that?"

"It's not done yet, Lucy."

"What do you mean? They didn't find Cassie?"

"No, worse than that. They did. I'm fairly sure they're taking her back, well let's call it 'home' for now. I... I have an aching feeling that Cassie's parents are going to blame her for this. I... keep seeing horrendous things every time I blink. Every time I close my eyes, I see her horrified face with the thought of being returned to her parents."

"Yeah... I guess you're right."

"Lucy, I've got a favor to ask of you."

"Um... what?" she asks in hesitation. It feels like she's bracing for me to ask her to pick up where I left off.

"Do you still have the keys to my house?"

"Yeah, I think. Why?"

"I want you to stay at my house for awhile. Keep an eye on Cassie. Just make sure that nothing happens to her."

"Y-yeah, I think I can do that. Good luck."

"I'm not the one who needs it."

I hang up the phone. It's another small morsel of relief, an increasingly rare commodity. As I turn, I see that Hammerston isn't there. His presence was replaced by that of Sadowski. Perhaps relief isn't as rare as I thought. He beckons me into a room for questioning, although it seems quite apparent that he already knows many of the answers.

"Are you sure that you don't want an attorney present?" he asks.

"Don't need one," I reply.

"So... do you just want to talk, or should I start asking the questions."

"What happened with Cassie?" I blurt out, not even thinking.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Wright, but I can't tell you that."

We sit quietly for some time in an attempt to answer the question without answering the question. Sadowski doesn't need to tell me where Cassie is. I know where Cassie is—the officer's grim expression gives that away. There is a lot that I'm willing to tell; a lot that I want to tell, but it's all converged into a mass of strained confusion. He gives a few more moments of silence before he decides to make the true first move.

"So... I guess the obvious question is... why'd you do it?"

Because I'm an idiot.

Because I couldn't take someone suffering like that.

Because the authorities didn't do their own job.

"I did it because... I didn't know what else to do."

"A little less vague, please."

"I don't know how to do anything but to be blunt. I saw a scared little girl being badly hurt by her father. I tried to call the authorities and when they do nothing I became afraid for my own life. Cassie's father, Mr. Galvin made it perfectly clear that he knew what I did. I couldn't risk the authorities not doing anything again and..."

"You took the law into your own hands."

"That's one way of putting it. Can we stop bullshitting each other for a minute. I know that you took Cassie back to her parents; I know that she's in danger. There has to be something you can do."

"Mr. Wright, the last thing that I'm obliged to do is further traumatize a family that's just been reunited," Officer Sadowski said aloud. Then he turned ducked lowly on the table, almost as if to say something in secret, "but there's one thing I think I can do for you: provide some comfort. If what you say is true, your imprisonment is on Cassie. They'll keep her good and happy until they get her to do what they want."

The strangest of all comforts.